

How-to: Research

Do you know the value system of Ghana, the allies of Tajikistan or the interests of Chile? It is impossible to have an answer to all questions – especially when they just came up during the session. But with an extensive research you will not only be able to represent and defend your countries position better during the debates, you will have much more fun as well. The conference as a whole benefits from delegates who come well prepared.

Sources

A simple first step for your research could be Wikipedia. Most articles are complex enough, fact-checked and up to date. Therefore, they can offer a first general overview on a topic, different important aspects and give some further information on possible conflict parties.

Most of the topics have already been discussed by UN-bodies, therefore you may find official documents or even resolutions, which will help you to understand the current status of the issue. Keep in mind that almost every source wants to convince the reader of certain point of view. Even different official statistics released by countries involved in the issue may vary depending on the sources used and the country's agenda and interests. For example, the opposition party of a civil war may count the civilians and combatants killed after an air strike completely different than the government. This may lead to the conclusion, that the country's government uses brutal force against civilians to maintain its control and an intervention by the international community is necessary. Often there is no such thing as "objectivity", therefore you should be critical when reading sources and try to keep the opposite position in mind.

5 important aspects:

1. Information about your country
2. Getting a general understanding of the topic
3. Previous international activities
4. Your country's position on the topic
5. Possible activities of the UN concerning the topic

1. Information about your country

Your role at KarlMUN is to represent your country and its interests during the debates.

Therefore, you should gather various types of information to get an impression for your country's characteristics.

A country's opinion on certain topics is usually the result of historic, cultural and religious influences, geographic circumstances and economic interests. Collecting some key facts is an important first step for your preparation as a delegate. After your country-specific research you should be informed about the aspects you find in the list below:

Physical Geography

- What is your country's official name?
- What region of the world is your country located in?
- How big is your country? (square kilometers)
- Who are your country's neighbors?
- How would you describe your country's physical features and climate?

Politics and Government

- When was your country founded?
- What type of government does your country have?
- Who are some of your country's leaders?
- How many people serve in your country's military?
- Who are your country's allies? Enemies?
- What is your country's capital?

Culture

- What is your country's population?
- What is your country's ethnic composition?
- What is your country's official language?
- What other languages are spoken?
- What are some of the major cities?

Economy

- How would you describe the quality of life in your country?
- What is your country's total Gross Domestic Product?
- What are some of your country's natural resources?
- What is your country's currency?
- What are your country's major imports and exports?
- What are your country's biggest trading partners?

Security and Military

- Military alliances
- Allied countries
- Hostile countries
- Military spending
- Army strength
- Nuclear/Biological/chemical weapons

Turning points in history

Current events

i.e. recent or near future elections/ uprisings/ unrest

2. Getting a general understanding of the topic

After you got to know your country, it is time to get a general understanding of the topics the conference is about. Before you can answer the question: „Why is this topic (not) worth debating for my country?“ you have to know why this is an issue for some countries in the first place.

- What is it generally all about?
- Where are conflict lines?
- Which other aspects are related to the topic?
- What are economic, ecologic, social, political, etc. dimensions, which should be considered?

For example, setting stricter climate policies are substantial for countries, which are heavily threatened by climate change, whilst oil and coal exporting countries fear the decreasing income and increasing unemployment – on the other hand the market for green energy is growing, from which certain countries might profit.

As first step, you can start with reading the committees description/ background guides we prepared for you. After you understood the basics – why is the topic relevant, what is the cause and which countries are mainly affected - you can start your research and figure out the details.

3. Previous international activities

Most of the MUN-topics have already been discussed by the United Nations. The debates at KARLMUN build on the decisions the international community already made and have the goal to discuss the future of the topic. Because of this, you should research the history of the topic in the UN and its interim status, otherwise the debates might be redundant to the current status quo of the issue. Informing yourself about previous international activities, e.g. adopted UN resolutions,

is essential for your preparation, because it leads to a deeper understanding about the functioning of the UN and complexity of the topic.

Possible previous international activities are:

- UN-Resolutions by committees of all kind
- Activities by specialized agencies (e.g. UNESCO)
- Other UN-activities (e.g. peacekeeping missions)
- International agreements and contracts
- Activities of NGOs and international organizations

Five steps in the decision-making process of the UN:

Step	UN-Sources
Debating – UN, NGOs and member states debate	Speeches of the UN, NGOs and member states in the UN bodies
Negotiation – member states try to find consensus	Important final documents and protocols
Taking action – adoption or rejection of a resolution, treaty or contract by the member states	Resolutions, treaties or contracts
Implementation – UN, NGOs and member states implement the resolutions, conventions and contracts	Existing and previous programs of the UN or NGOs
Reporting and evaluation – the UN-secretariat, NGOs and member states report their progress of the implemented solution	Reports of UN bodies, NGOs or the UN Secretary General

4. Your country's position on the topic

Next up is the most important step of your preparation: Combine your knowledge about your country and the discussed topic. Your country's position on the topic is, what your country "thinks" how the issue should be handled in the future. Key questions are:

- How is the country affected?
- What are important interests related to the issue?
- What helps to pursue or interferes with the country's interests?

The discussed topic may not always affect every country directly. In that case you can follow your country's fundamental attitudes, like: is the country pro-Western/ Russian/ China/ neutral? What would strengthen the region/ your allies?

5. Possible activities of the UN concerning the topic

The goal of an UN-Resolution (also at a MUN) is to find a solution for a problem through activities by the United Nations. The focus is not on possible activities your country can execute, it is about measures your country wants the United Nations to implement. Maybe your country wants to expand an existing UN-program. Start to be creative and think of possible solutions which would be in your country's interest and are practicable. You can use scientific publications, refer to work of NGOs or other think tanks. There are many ways to convince the committee with your arguments in speeches. And hopefully they will find its way into a resolution the committee agrees on.

Helpful links

The internet is full of information, a very detailed overview for possible sources for information can be found on: <http://bestdelegate.com/research/>

Possible sources directly related to the UN-activities are speeches, resolutions or other official documents released by UN-bodies. These can be found on the official UN-website <http://www.un.org/>. Official documents can be found in the Official Document System of the United Nations. (<https://documents.un.org/prod/ods.nsf/home.xsp>)

A good start for gathering key facts is "The world factbook" by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). (<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/>)

One of many possible sources for your background research is the Global Policy Forum. (<https://www.globalpolicy.org>)

National and international newspaper article can contain some interesting information as well. But keep in mind, that they may not be objective and may represent the authors or newspapers opinion on the topic.